CHAPTER III

PREREQUISITES AND THEIR MEASUREMENT
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Prerequisites and their measurement

This chapter attempts to arrive at the skills students are expected to acquire, by analysing

i. the Madras University post-graduate syllabus in English;

ii. the recommendations for inclusions at the M.A. level by the U.G.C. National Workshop on Syllabus in English in 1977.

As a preliminary to the analysis of the syllabus the features of a syllabus\(^1\) are stated and then the features of the Madras University syllabus are checked against them. This is done to provide a background for the development of a scale to measure the abilities with which students enter the post-graduate course. The skills required for satisfactory learning on the course are collected and categorized and a rationale is developed for the measure.

Criteria for syllabus statements:

Syllabus statements are descriptions of the course

as envisaged. They are working papers on which most of the activity of teaching and, presumptively, learning is based. They constitute a plan of action for the implementation of curriculum in a particular course of programme of study, curriculum being the larger programme for education in a particular subject. It follows that unless the plan of action is spelled out clearly there is likely to be confusion and lack of direction in the execution of the teaching programme. A syllabus must contain the following in order to be a plan of action:

i. a statement of the broad aims of the course or general aims, clearly specified. These aims could relate to cognitive development or to affective development or at lower levels even to the development of psychomotor and mechanical skills. For example: "The student is expected to develop an enjoyment of literature by the end of the course"; or "the student must be able to express a considered response to a given poem or novel and support the nature of his response with evidence from close reading of the poem or novel". These are directional statements. To teach someone something
requires acting in certain ways. Directional statements provide the orientation for the action. When teaching is undertaken as a public enterprise one has to act rationally or in a way that is accountable. To be able to do this we need to think about the ends we wish to achieve. Deciding on the objects of an action involves considering all the different possibly relevant values, choosing from among them and ordering them for priority and using them in preparing the activities through which the objects are to be achieved. Certainly, a one-to-one correspondence between a stated aim and a particular activity or set of activities cannot be established. There is bound to be overlap of directionality between two activities. A close reading exercise can lead both to sharpening of linguistic ability and to clearer perception of literary features, for instance. Or a writing exercise on a particular passage is likely to lead to greater deployment of intensive reading ability as well as greater refinement of writing. The statement of aims then is the guide, the lodestar of the educational programme.

ii. A statement of specific objectives to be attained by the end of the course, that are consonant with the
general aims, and are promotive of them. Some examples are: The student must acquire the ability to perceive the thematic relations between the octet and sestet of a sonnet; identify the atmosphere of a given short story or a description and give support from the text for his statement, interpret a particular action of a character in the particular or immediate context of its occurrence in a novel or in the overall context of the theme of the novel.

The statement of specific objectives is important because it acts as the blue-print or as a paradigm from which a number of activities can flow. These objectives could be end objectives or enabling objectives. There is nothing inherent in an objective itself that characterises it as an end-of-the-road objective or as a formative one. One takes decisions, generally on a rational basis, about what is to be achieved and how to go about it.

iii. Indications of the (nature of) procedures to be adopted or methodology to be deployed in the teaching-learning situation. They would indicate the nature of contact between teachers and learners and the materials used in the teaching-learning
a. in terms of varieties of interaction:
   between teacher and class, between teacher and
group, between teacher and individual pupils,
between pupil and class, pupil and group, pupil
and pupil and between pupil and text;

b. in terms of organisation of interaction:
lecture, seminar, symposium, tutorial, silent
reading, collaborative composition, group dis-
cussion, buzz group, fish pond, demonstration,
recitation, role play, performance, educational
tour, display or exhibition and so on; and

c. in terms of purpose of contact:
reading, writing, talking or discussing, debating,
gathering references, exchanging of information.

These are all features of classroom activities and
some of them are features of preparatory or extension
activities outside of the class. They help the teaching
to be de-centralised and allow the learner to assume an
active role in the dynamics of the classroom and academe.

The following extract from "Practical Developments
in Literature Teaching Methodology" by Alan Durent (1987)
gives a sample of varied approaches to learning activities for the literature class.²

'Comparison' activities.

"Contrast focuses, observations and comments".
(e.g. comparing texts about same subject in different registers)

'Replacement activities'

"Alter some aspect of text to monitor changing effect".
(e.g. substituting new words into text, like ones they replace in some respects, different in others)

'Ordering' activities.

"Test concepts of structure, cohesion and coherence".
(e.g. putting sentences of a jumbled paragraph in order)

'Completion' activities: Cloze procedure.

"Remove elements from text to test predictive power of contextual cues".
(e.g. deleting words from text and inviting participants to insert words on the basis of information gathered from context of utterance.)

'Prediction' activities.

"Check reading hypotheses by actually anticipating aspects of text during

reading process".
(e.g. presenting opening of a novel or short story sentence by sentence, and collecting and testing out predictions about its subsequent development).

'Taxonomy' activities.

"Identify and catalogue features".
(e.g. labelling utterances of a dramatic text according to speech act or function, then classifying the functions listed)

'General problem-solving' activities.

"Devise questions which have determinate answers".
(e.g. identifying point of transition from original author to modern author in an unfinished work later completed by someone else.)

'Continuation' activities.

"Write extension to piece of text".
(e.g. writing four more lines to 'Kubla Khan', then analysing stylistic parameters guiding composition.)

'Composition' activities.

"Rework text in another genre or idiom".
(e.g. drawing a sociogram to represent relations between characters in a novel.)

iv. The materials that are to be used in the process of teaching-learning. These may include text books, audio and visual material, films, popular magazines, paperbacks, anything from graffiti to criticism. The materials may be chosen, balancing several criteria
such as traditional value, student interest, teacher enthusiasm, intrinsic value in facilitating achievement of objectives, availability and so on. It is also useful to specify what material may be used for set induction in the students' mind, for intensive study and for supplementation. The use of materials is greatly dependent on the methodology being followed and so is the choice. In specifying materials another useful practice is to present them in gradation of difficulty of access to the students. This is no easy task as there are several different dimensions of difficulty, intrinsic to the subject and to the context of situation in which it is taught. These dimensions are language, culture, literary convention, nature of deviation within these, students' maturation level, and several others. Still another helpful practice is to give concrete sample activities using certain styles of group dynamics with certain materials. An instance would be to give four prose passages by two different authors and ask the students to assign the passages to the true authors. The work is to be done in small groups of not more than four people. Each individual in the group should have his work assigned. All the work is then pooled and the students have to muster
arguments in favour of their decision. The group's collective argument is then delivered to the class. The various groups try to find points of agreement and disagreement. The disagreement is then taken up and negotiated further until an answer is agreed upon by all. Samples of such activities need to be given to re-focus old and settled teachers, to guide new teachers and to inform students. Undeniably, "the means of education are the educational experiences that are had by the learner". ³

v. models of evaluation:

Evaluation procedures must be in congruence with the objectives of instruction. Evaluation procedures must be made explicit to all concerned: teachers on the course, students, examiners and the public who may be interested, for accountability requires that a publicly endowed system be answerable to the society that supports it. The evaluation model should be designed to reinforce the statement of aims and objectives by being faithful to them and should not get dissipated in focus by extraneous considerations. Procedures for evaluation of

³. Tyler, Constructing Achievement Tests (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State UP, 1934).
achievement should ensure comprehensive coverage of the subject area i.e., meet the criterion of content validity.

In the case of a subject like literature where competence is as important as, if not more important than, knowledge or information, content validity can be interpreted as construct validity i.e., congruence with the theoretical organisation or model of competence in the subject.

In developing and using an educational measuring instrument the following steps are involved:  

a. determining the purposes of the test i.e., deciding what operations are to be carried out using the measures: improving programmes and tests and taking administrative decisions (e.g., certifying students as having fulfilled requirements).

b. clarifying the instructional objectives of a course of study, i.e., specifying the attributes or qualities or attainments being measured.

c. devising tasks successful performance of which is evidence of learning, i.e., stating the conditions under which the attributes will be observed, and defining indications of acceptability;

d. indicating the norms of correctness or acceptability or adequacy i.e., defining the standard for making judgements about the acceptability of the observed behaviours.

e. deciding points to be awarded to various items and various types of responses i.e., preparing a scheme assigning numerical value to the judgements made.

A syllabus statement is adequate for its purpose only when it meets the requirements aforesaid. It is possible that in particular institutions owing to long usage this form of statement has been dispensed with as labouring the obvious since established traditions
or at least assumptions have evolved over time. In the case of English Literature, "the traditional high status of literature has paradoxically prevented the degree of analysis of aims, methods and objectives found in the discussion of other, less favoured subjects."  

The above is not to be construed as a plea for inflexible courses of study. The syllabus statement is no Procrustean bed on which to stretch or amputate educational courses. John Dewey's view of rational action is, in this context, more responsive to the needs of educational planning. Ends in view, according to him, should not be thought of as fixed targets but as signposts, as suggestions on how to observe, how to look ahead, how to choose in liberating and directing the energies of our actual situation. This means, to an extent, recognizing and accepting that a design may be valid at a given time for a given purpose to a given group of people in a given set of circumstances but that outside those limits it may not be valid at all.


Nor should it be understood that a syllabus is a Protean changeling, meaning different things, at once embodying radically opposed principles.

When the Honours course in English Literature was founded in Madras University in 1911 the justification for founding it was, as pointed out in Chapter I, that the study of English Literature would improve the standards of English use in India. So administrators of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Educational Service of the British Raj were drawn from among English Honours graduates who usually went on to acquire a degree in law before entering those services.

Later on, further justifications emerged, with the consciousness that vernacular languages have to be developed to meet the requirements of the modern world and that English is the language of advancement, of modern western thought. The dichotomy in education, of language and literature, did not exist then or had not yet become an issue.

"English Literature was a natural goal for language study, not just because literature contains the best uses of
the language but also because this literature was a product of what was generally understood to be the world of progress and advancement."

Local literature would benefit from being laid open to the influence of this vehicle of western cultural progress. And the modernization process in other spheres of national life required the continued intensive use of the English language.

The motivation of internationalism also acted to boost the status of English Literature and a degree in the subject was assumed automatically to be the mark of a cultured, liberally educated person.

The presence of a few master teachers, lecturers, rather orators also enhanced the value of the English Literature courses. Men like C.H. Sheppard, Mark Hunter et al. enjoyed literature and communicated this enjoyment to their students. Later generations of teachers, at a remove from the original motivations that conceived the English Literature course, followed in their

foot-steps but did not seem to feel the need for re-
evaluating the personal, social, academic and national
requirements to be fulfilled by learning English Lite-
rature. And so, in a gradual process of deterioration
which is inevitable in any unquestioning adherence to
established forms, everybody in the system is "deluded
with the shadow of knowledge cast in the form of some-
body else's opinion." 8

The concern at one time was not merely with spe-
cific books but with a value for tradition in the sense
in which Brumfit writes about it:

"the accumulated experience of thousands
of readers in the past and present who
have been committed to reading, thinking
about and discussing imaginative Liter-
ature for the light that it sheds on
themselves and their position as human
beings." 9

The losing sight of objectives and the passing off
of a list of text books as the syllabus has resulted in

8. Caldwell Cook (1917), 'The Play Way', qtd. in Directions
   in the Teaching of English, ed. D. Thompson (Cambridge:

a concern with particular books and their analysis as the be-all and end-all of literature study. At worst, this narrowing of purpose has led to the mushrooming of countless ready-made analyses in all forms of made-easies or bazar notes.

**Scrutiny of the present syllabus for M.A. (Madras):**

The syllabus is a list of text books assigned to ten papers, five for each year of study. In the case of two papers, a list of topics is also given. The 'syllabus' refers to the several courses in the curriculum as 'papers' reflecting the way examinations overshadow all other considerations. The papers are largely concerned with aspects of English Literature, literature written by British and non-British authors. The papers are:

For the Batch beginning 1987

I Chaucer and the Elizabethan Age
II The Age of Milton and Johnson
III The Romantic Age
IV The Victorian Age
V Twentieth Century Literature
Each course title is followed by a list of books. Each literature paper has poetry, prose, drama components and in modern literature there is an additional fiction component. A few books in each genre are earmarked for detailed study and the others are meant to supplement as non-detailed, general or extended reading. The Shakespeare and Commonwealth Literature papers recommend specific critical readings as well. The English Language paper contains a list of topics, a list of texts and a list of references. So also does English Language Teaching, the only 'application' paper.

The textbooks are regarded as synonymous with syllabus; nowhere is there an explicit elaboration of their
role as tools for attaining literary abilities. There is no statement of objectives.

The syllabus as it exists implies cognitive aims in the sense of learning through books. Along with the examinations it expresses literary aims — developing critical ability, widened knowledge of conventions and techniques and awareness of literary history and tradition. Sometimes, much too rarely, the examinations indicate a cluster of affective aims concerned with enjoyment, personal engagement and response and widening of experience.

The syllabus as operated on the course implies different things to different teachers depending on the period of their specialisation, the critical approach they have been trained in and their enthusiasm for teaching, if any; in short, the conditioning effects of their own education on the teachers themselves.¹⁰

The lack of directives relating to teaching procedures or activities for using the textbooks has generally

¹⁰ R. Protherough, Teaching Literature for Examinations, 16
led to teachers falling back upon the methods of their own teachers as they perceive them. Earlier generations have used the transmission style of teaching.\textsuperscript{11} This style is characterized by tight teacher control, authoritative pronouncements to passive receivers, concentration on details and on localized meanings and limitation of topics to those likely to appear in the examination.

The syllabus does not spell out evaluation procedures or set out a blue-print for a model question paper. A model paper is sent out to the colleges in the course of the teaching year. It must also be noted that no model scheme of evaluation accompanies the model question paper as an indication of expected/required standards of performance.

A preliminary examination of the question papers for each course reveals the following features (an investigation of specific details follows this analysis):

\textsuperscript{11} Douglas and Dorothy Barnes, Versions of English (London: Heinemann, 1984) 225-9, 244-5, make a crucial distinction between the transmission and initiation modes of teaching.
i. Each paper has a three hour duration.

ii. Each paper is valued for a hundred marks.

iii. All literature papers have an annotation question where students have to locate the given lines in their context in the literary work, establish their significance in the situation as well as their value in terms of literariness, or point out the rhetorical or literary devices and so on.

iv. All papers have essay questions calling for amplification, analysis, exposition, justification, comparison and contrast, critical study, discussion, commentary, summarising, definition with illustration, description, debating.

v. The English Language paper - Paper IX has long and short essay questions calling for an information display.

vi. The Chaucer paper has a translation question and the Languages paper has a transcription question. Chaucer study should rightly belong at this level to the language course in the view of the researcher because students are for the first time introduced to specimens of Middle English.
vii. There is an unreasonable amount of choice in the grouping of questions; for example, 2 essays to be written out of 6 with an extra choice embedded in a question.

viii. Almost all questions test information. Response elements get buried in the information load and they do not get retrieved because of the heavy stress on knowledge.

ix. The absence of clearly specified evaluation schemes tend to mask the higher level objectives and the lack of a common standard model renders evaluation very impressionistic, seriously affecting the validity and the reliability of our examinations.

To illustrate this point: A question reads:

"Examine the criticism that Badal Sircar's Evam Indrajit reflects the dilemma of an Indian writer who knows too much about Existentialism and very little about his own Indian culture and society."^{12}

To answer this the students should know what existentialism means, what use of existentialist ideas has

been made in the play and in what ways the characters and situations and actions and speeches in the play go against expectations of Indian culture and society. The question is of an evaluative-critical nature. But in the absence of an evaluation scheme, it is opaque as to what it really tests. An expose on existentialism is, however brilliant, not adequate. Facility of expression also tends to distort an examiner's perception; especially when he or she is left to decide what a good answer is, entirely on their own. How good an examination is depends a great deal on what standards are required in the answer.

In general, the questions

a. assume information content and traditionally handed down criticism to be of prime importance;

b. test general writing skills rather than literary skills; where they do test literary matter the focus is on knowledge of content and not on the individual's specifically literary abilities;

c. do not call specifically for individual judgement or personal response.
Further, evaluation procedures seem to be used merely to assess student performance for certification. There is no evidence of feedback from evaluation being used to effect improvement of the teaching programme.

More detailed analysis of question papers of the B.A. and M.A. has been undertaken to enumerate

i. the skills/knowledge sought to be developed/impacted at each level;

ii. the kind of growth in achievements/ability implied by the questions on the M.A. papers and the B.A. papers. (See Appendix IV);

iii. the similarity/difference in approach and attitudes to English literature teaching as implied by the framing of the questions.

As a first step, the following papers are taken up for comparison:

Indian writing in English - B.A. I Yr. & M.A. I Yr. (March 1986) (Sept. 1986)

American Literature - B.A. II Yr. & M.A. II Yr. (March 1986) (Sept. 1986)

Shakespeare - B.A. III Yr. & M.A. II Yr. (March 1986) (April 1985)

Language - B.A. III Yr. & M.A. II Yr. (March 1986) (Sept. 1986)
These are considered first because the titles of the papers are nearly identical for both levels. In the case of the other papers, the B.A. papers have genre-based divisions whereas the M.A. papers have period-based divisions. Comparison is still possible because what is being got at is the skill level demanded of the students.

Indian Writing in English is taken up first since there is a three year period between First year of B.A. and First year of M.A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>B.A. First Year</th>
<th>M.A. First Year</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Section A - Knowledge of texts that have received prior treatment in class</td>
<td>No equivalent question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Writing short notes on a variety of topics - (30 words)</td>
<td>2 mark questions based directly on the content of the texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 mark questions based directly on the content of the texts</td>
<td>Compulsory qn. giving the context of given passages along with critical notes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Section B - Compulsory qn. annotation i.e., explaining with critical notes on any outstanding or relevant features of given lines</td>
<td>Compulsory qn. giving 20 or relevant features of given lines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>4 - 200 word essays</td>
<td>4 essays</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 - 500 word essays</td>
<td>2 - 500 word essays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From this preliminary look it is clear that the textual knowledge objective emerges as the most important one tested in 3.A.

Questions in Section A cover such aspects as the themes of poems, the summarisable or paraphrasable content of prescribed pieces (e.g. significance of title, Rajaji's ideas of family relationships, Coomaraswamy's definition of literacy) and the meaning of specific symbols used in them. The rubric requires the students to write short notes in about 30 words on various topics from texts. This section carries one-tenths of the marks of the paper.

The rubric for section B is "annotate", used presumably in the sense of "explain with critical notes on salient features". In the present researcher's experience both as a student and as a teacher, "annotate" has meant

"locate the given lines in their immediate context in a work, write critical comment on their importance to that context of situation and make remarks on the literary devices used in the lines and their affect".
But the marks allotted (i.e., 2 marks each) do not indicate either a high level of analysis required or if they do, they do not indicate top priority in reflecting the objectives of the course because they carry only one-tenths of the marks allotted to the paper.

Section C has a choice of long answer questions, two calling for 200 words each and two requiring 500 words. The type of ability demanded here is the marshalling of information from and about the text into a coherent essay form. Questions require textual knowledge i.e., they are questions of knowledge about the who, what, where, by whom, to whom of the text. The students have to paraphrase one or more aspects of the text. For instance: aspects of Sita's character in 'Lakshman', the facts of life in 'Marriage', the main points in 'Shaper Shaped', the character of Dr. Aziz, the significance of the title Muktha Dhara.

The 500 word essay is not qualitatively different from this. Only it demands a greater power of organisation because of the sheer length of answer required.
There is no perceptible difference as can be seen from
the following examples: the picture of future India as
given by Ambedkar, the significance of the title 'Sacri-
ifice', the character of Bibhuti, the relative importance
of family or community as shown by Rajagopalachari.

It is notable that none of the questions test any-
thing specifically literary. It happens that the texts
are literary ones but the questions are on general under-
standing of the text and require a literate's abilities
of writing, even assuming that they are so general as
to need no more than a through-a-bazar-guide-acquain-
tance with the text.

At M.A. the context questions carry greater weigh-
tage (4 marks for each amounting to 20 marks altogether). The abilities tested are the same as those for B.A.

There is no discernible rationale behind the di-
vision into sections B and C. Both sections contain
questions that call for summarised versions of aspects
of a text. For example, 'Describe the evolution of
thought of the poet Rabindranath Tagore from the collection of songs *The Gitanjali* from section A and 'Describe the sympathetic attitude of Sarojini Naidu toward the Indian people from a study of her poems'. There are also questions for which the student can write answers only through extended reading. For example: 'Muktha Dhara is one of the best and most moving plays of Tagore. Discuss' in Section A. And in Section B: 'The Guide of R.K.Narayan is one of his best novels. Substantiate this statement with your reasons'. Both these questions require reading beyond the play or novel mentioned. So does Q.No.8 in section B: 'Give a critical estimate of any two of the following poets: Henry L.V. Derozio, N.Ezekiel, R. Parthasarathy, Arun Kolatkar'.

The point to note here is that there is no comparable question on the paper for B.A. A wider reading is expected of the student at B.A. than at the B.A. for in a question like No.5 in Section A, the operative word is 'discuss' showing that the question is not a closed one, the direction of the answer is not pre-determined. The student is free to agree or disagree with the given
proposition that Muktabhors is one of the best and most moving plays of Tagore. This presupposes

i. a knowledge of all plays of Tagore and

ii. reasoned out response to them on the part of the student.

The word 'best' implies the use of some criteria of judgement, possibly traditionally agreed upon criteria. 'Most moving' is an expression that applies directly to the student's own and individual response.

These open-ended types of question are found along with questions like No. 7 in Section A where the line of answer is already determined by the rubric: 'Chanda- lika is a tragedy of self-consciousness over-reaching its limit. Substantiate'.

There is a qualitative difference in the rubrics used in the E.A. paper, as can be seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E.A.</th>
<th>M.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What &amp; how questions on content</td>
<td>discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explain</td>
<td>substantiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sketch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give an account</td>
<td>give a critical estimat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how does X show</td>
<td>comment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shakespeare

B.A. III Year
Write short notes
annotate
write a note
comment on the role of...
discuss
sketch

M.A. II Year
give the context of
discuss
elaborate
are you in sympathy with the view that...
bring out

In the case of the Shakespeare papers, the rubrics 'discuss' and 'comment' appear in the B.A. paper. But on closer examination the questions are very much tied to the text under study whereas in the case of the M.A. paper the questions involve knowledge of Shakespearean theatrical practices and criticism. A very few questions that specifically require the student's own response figure in the M.A. paper. The B.A. paper features questions at the knowledge level.

American Literature

B.A. II Year
Write short notes
annotate

M.A. II Year
annotate
bring out
B.A. II Year  

bring out  
comment on theme  
consider  
examine the theme  
write a critique  
Do you agree?

K.A. II Year  
in what sense  
explain the theme, attitude and view  
consider  
discuss  
give a critical account  
write a critical note  
substantiate  
give a critical view

In the American Literature and the Shakespeare papers for B.A. the questions imply a slightly higher level of treatment than the 'what' and the 'how' questions (which also appear in these papers apparently for the benefit of students who possess a lower level of ability).

Language and Linguistics

B.A. III Year

March 1986

20 write short notes (5)  
40 200 word note (4)  
40 500 word essay (2)

The English Language

M.A. II Year

September 1986

20 write short notes (5)  
60 essay (3)  
20 essay/transcription
The break-down of questions under the various rubrics is as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 1986</th>
<th>September 1985</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write short notes l</td>
<td>write short notes l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe llllll</td>
<td>compare and contrast l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consider l</td>
<td>what/point out/how lllll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trace l</td>
<td>define l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comment on l</td>
<td>trace l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discuss l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>describe l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>illustrate l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>answer l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>transcribe l</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of instances of typical "imperative" words used in 289 questions in 22 M.A. question papers in 1985 and 1986 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a critical note</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elucidate, bring out, elaborate, justify, illustrate, explain, substantiate define, trace, how/what</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you...?/Do you ...?</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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289
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What is tested in B.A. and N.A. is summed up below after scrutinising question papers for both examinations:

**B.A.**

1. Thorough knowledge of
   i. the paraphraseable aspects of the texts, such as involved in "selective narration"
   
   ii. treatment of theme, ideas in essays, stories, plays

   iii. the roles of characters in stories, plays, etc.

2. Knowledge of the basic terms of literary technique and critical analysis such as symbol, metaphor, image, soliloquy.

**N.A.**

1. Knowledge of the prescribed texts and the movements of which they are representative.

2. Knowledge of other works of the same author or belonging to the same movement or period.

3. Knowledge of the prominent critical work on the texts (as implied by providing lists of critical works for reference.)

4. Application of this knowledge to tackle open-ended questions.

5. Explicitly stated personal response to the works and textual support for such response.

Since writing is the major mode for examining, it is useful to see what kinds of writing students are called on to produce in the course of assessment. For this Douglas Barnes and John Seed's study of a dozen

O level papers set in 1979 proved to be a good precedent. They have provided a helpful system of categories to analyse questions set on literature at O level. Their category system was devised for school level examinations but it is found to be applicable in analysing the papers at B.A. level. However, it is found that some questions at M.A. extend beyond these categories. The precise ways in which they transcend the Barnes and Seed categories are:

1. the questions relate a work to:
   
   i. the movement or literary tradition to which it belongs,
   
   ii. the period to which it belongs,
   
   iii. the techniques it employs, and
   
   iv. other works of the same author.

2. the questions call for a personal response in other ways than through imaginative reconstruction or through transposition.

However, comparatively few of the M.A. questions fall essentially outside the Barnes and Seed categories.
Common formulations of single-sentence questions with a single imperative verb result in a certain emphasis on a relatively restricted range of skills -- the ability to remember, select appropriately and paraphrase parts of a text B.A. or texts M.A., the ability to select appropriate incidents from a story or play and to utilise them to attribute stylised motives or personality characteristics to a fictional person, and the ability to relate a simple theme given in the question to statements and incidents in the texts. With most questions it is clear that a personally involved response is not required.

What emerges from the above analysis is that a particular kind of study of texts is imposed on the students by the nature of the questions set and by the fact that the mode of assessment is a one-shot written examination consisting of such questions.

Scrutiny of a consensus syllabus:

The shortcomings seen above have been recognized in the profession and the Central Institute of English and

### Table 2

Analysis of the essay section question papers using the Barnes and Seed categories and two others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B.A.</th>
<th>Thematic reading</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Selective narrative</th>
<th>Imaginative reconstruction</th>
<th>Personal response</th>
<th>Beyond one text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 C</td>
<td>3 a</td>
<td>b</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>d</td>
<td>e</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4 b</td>
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<th>M.A.</th>
<th>Section A</th>
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<td>Section B</td>
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<td>9 a</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>
Foreign Languages, Hyderabad took the initiative for a nation-wide study of university syllabi in English. The University Grants Commission National Workshop on Syllabus Reform in English was held in Hyderabad in 1977. This recommended a consensus syllabus based on the formulations of the zonal workshops held prior to it.

The zonal workshops themselves used a working paper entitled *Working Paper 3 "English Literature Courses at the Universities"* (privately circulated by CIEFL as the starting point for their deliberations. (See Appendix V).

The preliminary suggestions made by the working paper for the M.A. syllabus design are as follows:

i. The syllabus should be framed as a course. That is the texts prescribed should be grouped around identifiable concepts; there should be a description of the course.

ii. Students should be encouraged to express and develop original responses and not rely upon critical opinions.

iii. In order to shape the objective of (ii), there must be a system of in-course assignments.
It is important to correct them rather than mark them although evaluation of some assignments could help in the internal assessment of the students.

iv. It follows from (iii) and (ii) that the question paper in term and annual examinations should aim at testing the student's sensibility and not become a stereotyped invitation to an exhibition of second-hand scholarship. (Working Paper 3, 83).

The working paper expresses a concern for combining the creation of a discriminating taste for literature with an introduction to some methods of acquiring literary scholarship. The solution it suggests is to provide a general study over a large area and to demarcate two specific areas to be studied in depth. A genre-based approach is preferred at this level by the paper to a chronology-based grouping of texts on the grounds that it might be more relevant to research requirements after M.A. and would also offer both teacher and student scope to develop approaches that are free and more sophisticated. The study is also to be supported by readings on the intellectual and social movements related to the texts on the course.
The working paper also has a model course on fiction worked out in its general outline and direction. A bibliography is provided which is divided into three parts, consisting respectively

i. of works predominantly theoretical in slant;

ii. of works in which critical analyses are undertaken;

iii. of novelists whose works relate to (ii) and could be discussed under (i).

Methodologically, the paper suggests

a. that the student's response to (iii) be stimulated to the maximum before he goes to (ii),

b. that the students should be asked on the basis of their study of (i) to apply their knowledge of theory to the text,

c. that the students should be asked to examine a variety of critical opinions and to observe their own judgements in relation to them.

This would provide the students with a valuable discipline in assuming responsibility for their response to a work and in establishing the relevance and place of that response in the scholarship on the work.
The final recommendations of the workshop for the M.A. are reproduced at 119a, b and c.

Comments on the recommended pattern:

1. English Linguistics and Literary Criticism are included among the core courses along with Major texts. This signals a recognition of their importance as aids to the learning of literature.

2. The teaching of English, figuring as an elective, includes the teaching of literature. The note shows awareness of the need to focus on the problems of teaching literature and the necessity to study the teaching situation in India.

3. The various inclusions under electives leave sufficient scope for job-related choice of courses and can cater to the needs of people who have vastly different purposes for studying English Literature.

4. What is of special import where this dissertation is concerned is that stipulations are made with regard to the eligibility of candidates for admission and with regard to the restrictions on the number of students to be admitted so as not to strain the resources of the Departments of English to the extent of impairing the course.
M.A. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The UGC Workshop on Syllabus Reform in English recommends the following:

1. The Syllabus in English at the M.A. should normally consist of 8 papers or 16 semester courses, but it should be open to the universities to add more papers or courses up to a maximum of 10 papers or 20 semester courses.

2. The break-up of the papers will be as follows:

   1-6 Core Courses
   7-18 Electives

Core Courses

1. The structure of Modern English: Phonology; Syntax and Semantics

2. Literary Criticism, Major Texts (the texts may include texts in Indian Poetics)

3-6 Four papers in English Literature

Note

The courses in English Literature should be based on texts. They should not be designed as survey courses or history of literature courses and there should be no separate paper on background study.

Adequate attention should, however, be paid to the period to which the texts relate.
Elective

7 American Literature
8 Indian Writing in English
9 Commonwealth Literature
10 Comparative Literature
11 Early and Medieval English Literature
12 Major Literary Forms
13 European Classics
14 Special Author or Period
15 Literary and Aesthetic Theory
16 The Teaching of English

Note
The course will have a reference to the situation in India and will pay sufficient attention to the problems of teaching literature.

17 Stylistics
18 Advanced Rhetoric and Composition

Note
This paper may include Problems of Translation.

3 Admission to the M.A. course should ordinarily be restricted to

i students who have secured at least a second class in the subject concerned, and

ii those others who qualify in a written test, which may be followed by an interview.

The number of students to be admitted should be determined in terms of the resources, staff, library, etc., at the disposal of the department.
4 The instructions at M.A. English should include four hours of lecture per paper, and two hours of tutorials and seminar work.

The maximum strength of a group should not exceed 8.

5 At least 25% of the marks assigned to each paper or course should be reserved for sessional work.
There is a recognition of the need for other modes of instruction than lectures.

The UGC Workshop Recommendations indicate the direction in which the universities may seek to improve or restructure their M.A. courses. On the question of eligibility for admission which is of immediate relevance to this study the Working Paper recognises the need for a screening test as requiring immediate attention:

"While everyone would agree on the need for screening and an entrance test there is no clear thinking about the nature of the test that should serve our purpose. What are the prerequisites we look for? If we make it simply a test of English language competence, we cannot be very sure that all those who have facility with English in the context of its work-a-day use necessarily possess the aptitude for literature study. For instance, most of those who come from English medium schools might easily satisfy the first requirement without really showing mental preparedness and innate competence for literary study nor for the kind of language ability involved in literary appreciation, analysis and critical discourse.

We, therefore, need reliable testing procedures which would test literary aptitude and sensibility as well as language competence. It is a demanding task, but one believes, it can be done. Once again here, there is one more "innovative" project
which is well worth addressing ourselves to, if the reorganisation we envisage is not going to be merely a matter of routine change such as we have long been used to". (77-78).

The following observations have to be made on the fore-going excerpt:

1. Without a certain level of language competence there is no question of trying to respond to literature. In Brumfit’s words: "A person who has not the reading or comprehension fluency to make sense in general of the words on the page is not in a position to respond to the literariness of a text" and so "a literary syllabus can only start when considerations of literary significance are directly apprehensible by the learner".15 We must keep in mind that the present study is concerned with the post-graduate level where certain levels of growth are already assumed.

The problem is compounded in our case as we are not native speakers of English.

"...[W]herever the literature to be studied is not in the students' mother tongue they must already have a thorough-going proficiency in the use of that language .... Without this solid back-

15. Brumfit, Language and Literature Teaching, 122
ground in the normative uses of English, the ESL (English as a Second Language) student of English Literature will be unable to perceive literary foregrounding, either in its socio-linguistic dimension or its syntactico-semantic manifestations", wrote Alex Rodger.16

2. The reference to "innate competence for literary study" takes us to the notion of literary competence. The implications of this notion are educationally significant:

i. Language competence is a necessary but not sufficient condition of literary skills,

ii. Literary skills have a separate "grammar" quite apart from the grammar of language.

iii. Literary competence can be acquired or internalized to the extent of becoming implicit knowledge.

3. The question of aptitude or innate competence is a matter for psychological investigation. However, J.B. Carroll provided a working definition of aptitude when he described it in terms of the amount of time

required by a student to learn some new skill or information or task. Using this idea of aptitude we may say that a person who has the skills to achieve the tacitly understood expectations of the M.A. syllabus in the duration of two years allotted for the course may be described as possessing the aptitude for literature study at the post-graduate level.

Extent of work required on the M.A. Programme

1. Read as many as 75 texts by diverse authors in several genres from different countries and written over a period of six centuries.

2. Relate the texts to their intellectual and socio-cultural backgrounds.

3. Consult critical discourse on the texts and the authors and the movements to which the texts belong.

4. Record one's own responses to the text and to criticism available on it.

5. Present seminars.

6. Prepare for written examinations on all courses. To perform these functions the students have to possess

a. a predisposition or other strong "instrumental"\(^{18}\) motivation for such study,

b. sufficient working knowledge of basic literary and critical terms in currency,

c. an interest in reading and preferably a mass of reading experience.

d. language competence for engaging in --

   i. general, everyday formal and semi-formal discourse

   ii. literary and critical text and discourse

It is obvious that the student cannot perform all the expected functions unless he has these interests and abilities. It stands to reason that the two year

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18. Wallace E. Lambert uses this word in relation to second language learning to refer to the purposes of language study that reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement such as getting ahead in one's occupation in 'A Social Psychology of Bilingualism', *Teaching English as a SL*, ed. Allen & Campbell (1965), 2nd ed. (Bombay & New Delhi: Tata McGraw, 1973) 385-403 (396).
period of the M.A. course does not offer sufficient
time to cultivate these interests and abilities and
at the same time to cope with the heavy requirements
of the course. Hence it is only fair to demand cer-
tain entry behaviours from aspirants to the course
and to demand them stringently.

An attempt is made here to specify and categorise
the prerequisite abilities broadly referred to earlier.
These are classifiable into literacy skills and literary
reading skills. For the purpose of this study the lite-
rary use of language is held as different from the con-
ventionally appropriate uses of language and as such
requires a trained reading capacity. In other words,
the student must have an "implicit understanding of the
operations of literary discourse which tells one what
to look for". 19 This means that there is prior literary
knowledge that is essential equipment for the students.

**Literacy Skills:**

The higher order language capabilities in the lan-
guage of the literature studied are a necessary, even though

not sufficient, condition for successful formal study. The student has to read, understand, express this understanding, interpretation and judgement in absolute terms as well as in terms of comparison. Tasks of reading and writing of fairly referential material are to be included to ensure that the student is an advanced literate: in English, Literacy is regarded as the ability to operate effectively with the writing system of a language. Some of the capabilities of a literate adult are:

**As a reader**

Fluent reading (both silent and oral) for a wide range of purposes with a wide range of appropriate responses

Wide range of reading techniques appropriate to the purpose among which are strategies for dealing with blockage or failure (e.g. ability to use a dictionary, to use reference books and to consult and discuss with other readers)

**As a writer**

Ability to produce coherent written texts appropriate to a wide range of situations (e.g. domestic, work-a-day, educational, social and professional)

Ability to communicate within the range self-centred to subject-centred (letter-writing, technical writing, etc.)

Ability to predict reader's reactions and to write with a specific audience in mind to produce a specific effect.

As a reader

Ability to make critical evaluation of texts (to verify information, to recognise expressions of opinion and prejudice in the text, to assess the writer's attitudes, strategies and purpose)

Ability to add to his stock of knowledge by relating present reading to past experience

As a writer

To anticipate reactions to the text (e.g. defining or not defining terms for lay or professional readership)

Ability to correct and amend original drafts and to examine self-produced material critically

Ability to produce appropriate forms of written language

Literary study skills or Literary competence which is

i. knowledge of the various literary conventions such as pastoral and romantic.

ii. knowledge of basic techniques used in literature such as dialogue, narration, metre, rhythm, stream of consciousness.

iii. knowledge of genres and sub-genres from the point of view of the reader's expectations, i.e., drama, farce, lyric.

iv. knowledge of structures of composition of a literary work (contrast, eternal triangle, parallelism, internal echo).
v. knowledge of the myths that inform western literature such as Biblical stories, classical mythology, legend and so on.

Ability to use (i) - (v) to understand and respond to a text i.e., response capability for

i. basic response -- engagement with the work, positive or negative.

ii. perception and understanding of over-all form or structure, tone, literary devices.

iii. justifying one's response, i.e., bearing responsibility for it through textual or interpretive evidence.

The expectation of an entrance test is not an ability for exhaustive analysis. The potentially able student of literature should manage to give some inkling of engagement with works of art as indicated by reading habits and by results on the tests. He should display some ability of interpreting and accounting for the interpretation i.e., we need to see whether the students can develop their primary responses without being evasive. For "...
Unlike private readers, students of literature are accountable for their reactions to the works they read. 21

The problem on hand is that students at the M.A. level have a mere two years' prescribed course of study. This is not sufficient time to acquire fundamental abilities as well as meet the higher level requirements. Hence the search for a selection device. Such a measure at this level must look backwards at what abilities students bring to the M.A. and forwards at what is expected by the end of the M.A.

To study the syllabus and make an inventory of skills that pertain to specific texts on the syllabus is not productive of useful generalisations. What is more to the point is the types of texts in terms of genre, mode and the types of knowledge and abilities that are required in understanding these types of texts.

The Basis of the Tests:

It is possible to design tests on

i. the texts studied in the B.A. course in English literature;

ii. the texts prescribed for the M.A. in English literature; or

iii. texts independent of their inclusion in either course; in other words, for all practical purposes, unseen texts.

For the present study, the third option has been chosen because the skills base is the most important prerequisite that a student brings to his reading. Regardless of what texts the student has studied formally, this study focuses on the language competence and the literary competence of the students. This is not to deny the importance of a knowledge background or the cumulative effect of years of reading experience. But basically,

"Whatever criteria you use, all you ever have to work with, as a teacher, are the perceptions of learners at a particular time. .... The inquiry environment simply recognizes that fact, proceeds from it and uses it to extend the range of viable alternatives." 22

What is required is an assessment of the students as they are with regard to their knowledge of the language of the literature, conceptual understanding, reading skills, attitudes, interests and habits of reading. As such these would be the most valid features to look for.

Besides, since undergraduates and graduates are both being tested, the most appropriate form of test would be one that is not tied to specific prescribed texts on any syllabus currently in use. On the other hand, no special effort is being made to see that the texts included do not figure in any syllabus. In other words, the starting point of the tests is not from the texts but from the competences that are sought -- a very important consideration not only for testing but for the formation of a syllabus.

_Problems focussed on in developing the measure:_

_Questions about the inter-relation of the skills:_

1. Is the possession of literary skills related to the faculty of literary competence?
2. Is the ability to appreciate prose related to the ability to appreciate poetry?

3. Does literary material with a native cultural background create more immediate impact than that with a foreign cultural background?

4. Is the ability to identify/name literary devices an indication of literary competence?

**Blueprint of tasks for the test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abilities Tested</th>
<th>Format of Testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Efferent&quot; reading i.e., reading comprehension of referential material.</td>
<td>Reading passage with multiple choice items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying registers/areas of discourse.</td>
<td>Selection from multiple choice items on short extracts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying speech acts/modalities</td>
<td>a continuous writing task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding unseen prose</td>
<td>Multiple choice items on short extracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding unseen poems;</td>
<td>Short answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding unseen fiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading Interest Inventory and Questionnaire on Reading Habits.

The central concerns of the testing are

i. how to acquire reliably and validly measurable samples of student abilities at the entry level and

ii. how to interpret the measurements derived from the samples.

Test format:

The recognition and the production modes of answering questions are used in the tests. The multiple choice item is the most popular one of the recognition type. This saves time and is reliably scored in the sense that the entire answer is pre-determined. The short answers required in justifying responses allow free response and at the same time eliminate the slight chance factor in the use of the multiple choice item. The tasks requiring longer written compositions are the most valid means of getting at the students' own response. Both validity
and reliability are sought to be improved here by
analytical marking adopting the framework provided
in 'The Elements of Writing About a Literary Work'
in place of overall impression-marking.

The approach governing the tests is stylistics
or language based and the pedagogic theory underlying
the presentation of objectives in this thesis is learner-centred. Hence, the focus of the tests is on the
two important groups of characteristics of learners:
their information and background in the subject until
entry to M.A. and their response capabilities.

Since the purpose of the tests is to provide a
picture of the strengths and weakness of the students
a profile is aimed at rather than an overall picture in
which the attainment in different areas of skills is
obsured and instead aggregated to a total score.

The purpose of the measure is to provide a profile
of abilities which can be used at the point of entry as
a selection device. Consisting of a series of tests, the
measure can also be used as a broad diagnostic device to advise students about their growth in skills.

The test is not intended as a speed test or even as a strictly timed test but for practical considerations a time limit of three hours is imposed on it.